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# Sun Yat-sen, Yang Ch'ü-yün, and the Early Revolutionary Movement in China

CHÜN-TU HSÜEH

SUN Yat-sen is well known as the founder of the Hsing-chung hui (Revive China Society), but few realize the significant role played by Yang Ch'ü-yün<sup>a</sup> who, for almost five years, was the first chairman of that revolutionary organization. According to one source, it was Yang who insisted on the establishment of a republican government in what is now known as the "first revolutionary attempt of Sun Yat-sen." This article is a study of the interplay of their leadership and the Chinese revolutionary movement from 1895 to 1900.

Yang Ch'ü-yün, known as Yeung Ku Wan in his time, was born on December 16, 1861, in Hong Kong, where his father was a school teacher and government interpreter. Yang's grandfather, a native of Fukien Province, was said to have been a district magistrate, a fact which cannot be verified. For some reason the old man left China and settled in Penang, Malaya. Yang's father was born in Penang, but he returned to Fukien at about sixteen and then settled in Hong Kong. At the age of fourteen, Yang Ch'ü-yün was apprenticed to the Hong Kong Naval Dockyard. His apprenticeship was cut short because of an accident which resulted in the amputation of three fingers of his right hand. Subsequently, he studied at an English school and, after graduation, taught at a local high school called St. Joseph College. Later, he became chief shipping clerk at the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company. In the spring of 1895, when he cooperated with Sun Yat-sen to form the Hsing-chung hui, he was an assistant manager at David Sassoon, Sons & Co., a British shipping company in Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup>

As early as March 13, 1892, Yang had founded an association called the Fu-jen wen-she<sup>b</sup> (Fu Jen Literary Society).<sup>2</sup> Among the sixteen members of the organization was Australian-born Tse Tsan Tai (Hsieh Tsan-t'ai),<sup>c</sup> a clerk in the Depart-

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<sup>1</sup> For a biographical sketch of Yang Ch'ü-yün, see *Yang Ch'ü-yün lüeh-shih* (Hong Kong, 1927) by an unknown author; also Feng Tzu-yu, *Ko-ming i-shih* [Fragments of the History of the Revolution], I (Changsha, 1939), 6-8; and V (Shanghai, 1947), 8-15; and Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui ko-ming shih-yao* [A Brief Revolutionary History of the Hsing-chung hui] (reprint; Taipei, 1956), p. 55. When a Chinese or Japanese author has two or more works cited for the second time, a shortened form of the English translation of the title is given.

<sup>2</sup> Tse Tsan Tai, *The Chinese Republic: Secret History of the Revolution* (Hong Kong, 1924), p. 8. Tse's book first appeared in serial form in the columns of the Hong Kong *South China Morning Post* of Nov. 1924.

ment of Public Works of the Hong Kong government.<sup>3</sup> The other six members whose names can be traced were either shipping clerks or worked for shipping companies. Their motto was *Ducit Amor Patriae*.<sup>4</sup> Their organization has been characterized as both a "Revolutionary Headquarters"<sup>5</sup> and a "social club."<sup>6</sup> It was probably in the nature of a study group for "new learning" and social activities.<sup>7</sup>

When the Fu Jen Literary Society was founded, Sun Yat-sen was in the last three months of his medical studies in Hong Kong. He had met Yang in the previous year. Both found a common interest in their respective progressive outlooks, though they did not immediately establish close relations. Sun was born to a peasant's family in today's Chungshan district, Kwangtung Province, on November 12, 1866.<sup>8</sup> At twelve (according to Western reckoning), he left his native village for Hawaii, where his elder brother Sun Mei had a general store. After attending an English missionary school there for several years, he returned to China in 1883. Two years later he was converted to Christianity. In 1892, after five years of uninterrupted medical studies in Hong Kong, he was graduated from the College of Medicine for Chinese.<sup>9</sup> After practicing briefly in Macao and Canton, he went to Shanghai in the spring of 1894. Then, in the summer of that year, he set out with his boyhood friend Lu Hao-tung to Tientsin in an attempt to present his reform ideas to the Chihli Governor-General Li Hung-chang.<sup>10</sup> The gist of the program presented to Li was set forth in four balanced lines of four ideographs each: full development of men's abilities; full exploitation of earth's resources; full use of material instruments; and unhampered flow of commerce.<sup>11</sup> He failed to secure an audience but managed to obtain from Li's aides an official endorsement to raise funds abroad for the purpose of

<sup>3</sup> Tse Tsan Tai was born in Sydney, Australia, on May 16, 1872, six years after his parents (natives of Kwangtung Province) had immigrated there. He received elementary education at the Grafton High School. At seven, he was baptised (in old age, Tse called himself a "Christian" and "also a staunch supporter of Confucius and his teachings"). At fifteen, he returned to Hong Kong with his mother, two younger brothers and three sisters. There he completed his education at Queen's College (high school) and entered the Hong Kong government service, where he remained ten years, chiefly performing clerical duties connected with Public Works. Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, pp. 6-7; and Chesney Duncan, *Tse Tsan Tai* (London, 1917), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of the Fu-jen wen-she, see Wang Hsing-jui, "Ch'ing-chi Fu-jen wen-she yü ko-ming yün-tung ti kuan-hsi" [The Fu Jen Literary Society and the Revolutionary Movement of the Ch'ing Period], *Shih-hsüeh ts'a-chih* [Historical Magazine], I, No. 1 (Chungking, Dec. 5, 1945), 35-45.

<sup>8</sup> In his autobiographical sketch written for Herbert A. Giles in 1896 in London, Sun Yat-sen stated that he had been born on November 22, 1866. After a thorough investigation by the Kuomintang authorities many years later, it was proved to be an error. See Tsou Lu, *Chung-kuo kuo-min tang shih-kao* [Draft History of the Kuomintang] (3rd ed.; Chungking, 1944), IV, 1194.

<sup>9</sup> Committee for the Compilation of Materials on the Party History of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang (chief editor: Lo Chia-lun), ed., *Kuo-fu nien-p'u ch'u-kao* [Chronology of Sun Yat-sen's Life: A Preliminary Draft] (Taipei, 1958), I, 1-45; hereafter cited as Kuomintang, *Chronology of Sun*.

<sup>10</sup> Kuomintang, *Chronology of Sun*, I, 45-50; also Feng, *Fragments*, III (Chungking, 1945), 28. Cf. Lyon Sharman, *Sun Yat-sen: His Life and Its Meaning* (New York: John Day, 1934), p. 32, and Marius B. Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 61. Both Sharman and Jansen date Sun Yat-sen's trip to North China in an attempt to see Li Hung-chang as having occurred in 1893 instead of 1894.

<sup>11</sup> For the text of Sun Yat-sen's letter to Li Hung-chang, see Sun Yat-sen, *Kuo-fu ch'uan-chi* [Collected Works], ed. Committee for the Compilation of Materials on the Party History of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang (revised ed.; Taipei, 1957), V, 1-12. The letter was edited first by Ch'en Shao-pai in Canton and then by Wang T'ao in Shanghai. See Ch'en Shao-pai, pp. 7-8; but

establishing an agricultural association.<sup>12</sup> He went to Honolulu in the fall where he founded the Hsing-chung hui. November 24, the date members of the organization began to pay dues, has officially been considered the founding date of the Hsing-chung hui.<sup>13</sup>

The chairman and other officers of the organization were chosen from the local Chinese community. An original record shows that from November 24, 1894, to September 2, 1895, one hundred and twelve Chinese—businessmen, traders, cooks, clerks, tailors, laborers, farmers, and local government employees—joined the organization. Practically all of them were of Kwangtung origin, the great majority being from Sun's native district. According to the record, the total amount of funds raised during the period was \$1,388 including the "shares" subscribed by a few "natives" (meaning probably Hawaiians). Sun took one hundred dollars with him when he returned to Hong Kong while \$1,040 (equivalent to HK\$2,000 at that time) was subsequently sent to him. His elder brother's "shares" were two hundred dollars. If Sun Mei had contributed more than this amount, as is generally supposed, it is difficult to understand why it was not recorded, since all the contributions appear to be business investments.<sup>14</sup>

In January 1895, Sun Yat-sen returned to Hong Kong<sup>15</sup> and shortly afterwards cooperated with Yang Ch'ü-yün to form the Hong Kong Hsing-chung hui.<sup>16</sup> Several members of the Fu Jen Literary Society joined the new organization. They established their headquarters at 13 Staunton Street and named their meeting place the Kuen Hang Club.<sup>17</sup> Yang was then thirty-five; Sun, twenty-eight; and Tse Tsan Tai, twenty-five. Among Sun's close friends who were active in the organization were two of his schoolmates, Cheng Shih-liang and Ch'en Shao-pai—both of Kwangtung

according to Lo Hsiang-lin, *Kuo-fu chih ta-hsüeh shih-tai* [The College Period of Sun Yat-sen] (Chungking, 1945), p. 15, n. 59, the letter could not have been edited by Wang T'ao. In any event it was subsequently published in the Shanghai *Wan-kuo kung-pao* (Chinese Globe Magazine) of October 1894. No record can be found that Sun had ever mentioned it in subsequent years (Kuomintang, *Chronology of Sun*, I, 54). It was discovered shortly after his death by a Chinese historian in 1925. Hua Sheng, "Kuo-fu shang Li Hung-chang shu fa-hsien ti ching-kuo" [Discovery of Sun Yat-sen's Letter to Li Hung-chang], Taipei *Chung-yang jih-pao* (Central Daily News), Sept. 11, 1956. For a biographical sketch of Wang T'ao, consult Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1943-44), II, 836-839.

<sup>12</sup> Tsou, *Draft History*, I, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Kuomintang, *Chronology of Sun*, I, 55, n. 13. Among the Kuomintang historians, Tsou Lu was almost the only one who insisted that the Hsing-chung hui was founded in Macao in 1892. His version has been adopted by some American and Japanese historians, but his source was solely based on the unauthorized and incorrect Chinese translation of Sun Yat-sen's *Kidnapped in London*. For Tsou's four articles on the subject written between 1942 to 1944 at Chungking, see his *Ch'eng-lu wen-hsüan* [Selected Works] (Shanghai, 1948), pp. 458-84. For an able refutation of his argument, see Feng, *Fragments*, III, 23-30 and 123-129.

<sup>14</sup> Committee for the Compilation of Materials on the Party History of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang (chief editor: Lo Chia-lun), ed., *Ko-ming wen-hsien* [Documents of the Revolution], III (Taiwan, 1953), 16-18; hereafter cited as Kuomintang, *Documents*.

<sup>15</sup> Kuomintang, *Chronology of Sun*, I, 53.

<sup>16</sup> Feng Tzu-yu and practically all the Kuomintang publications in the past have given "February 21, 1895" as the founding date of the Hong Kong Hsing-chung hui (for example, Feng, *Fragments*, V, 10; but according to Kuomintang, *Chronology of Sun*, I, 56, "February 18, 1895"). Tse Tsan Tai in his book previously cited gives no specific date except "in the spring of 1895" (p. 9), and records the "13th of March 1895" as the date of his "first meeting with Sun Yat-sen and others" (p. 4). It may be mentioned that with reference to the early Hsing-chung hui data, the Kuomintang historians often relied on the writings of Feng Tzu-yu who, in turn, relied on Tse's book which has no Chinese translation.

<sup>17</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, p. 8.

Province. Cheng was a member of the Triads, and he was responsible for soliciting secret society members for the revolutionary movement.<sup>18</sup>

The regulations of the Hong Kong Hsing-chung hui were substantially the same as, though more elaborate than, those of the Honolulu branch. In both the avowed aim was not to overthrow the Manchu dynasty but to organize progressive elements at home and abroad for the purpose of strengthening China. The Honolulu Hsing-chung hui regulations consisted of nine articles. The membership fee was five dollars, but voluntary contributions were welcomed. No new member was admitted without references from one member of standing. Meetings were held every Thursday evening presided over by the chairman or the vice-chairman, who were elected by the members. Among the thirteen other officers were two secretaries and one treasurer—the rest rotated routine administrative positions. Decisions were made by majority vote. No specific programs were laid down for saving China from the “danger of immediate partition” by foreign powers.

The Hong Kong Hsing-chung hui regulations contained ten articles. Its head office was to be in China, but branches could be established elsewhere if the minimum membership requirement of fifteen was met. The branch office was not to be used for gambling or social purposes. In addition to the five-dollar membership fee, members were invited to buy ten-dollar shares with the prospect of increasing their investment to one hundred dollars. New members were admitted upon recommendations of two members in good standing. Officers, elected once a year, included the chairman, vice-chairman, Chinese secretary, English secretary, treasurer, and ten directors of the board. Decisions were made only after careful consultation by five members and ten directors. The regulations set forth the following program: to establish newspapers to teach the masses, to establish schools to educate the talented, to develop industry for improving the livelihood of the people—anything that might help China's prosperity was to be promoted. What form of government China should have was not indicated.<sup>19</sup> According to a veteran revolutionary, Sun Yat-sen at this time, although working for the overthrow of the alien Manchu regime, did not oppose the monarchical institution if the emperor was Chinese; it was Yang Ch'ü-yün who insisted on the republican form of government.<sup>20</sup>

The original members in Honolulu and Hong Kong are often said to have taken an oath dedicating themselves to the “overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty, restoration of China, and the establishment of a republican government.”<sup>21</sup> But this fact has

<sup>18</sup> Cheng Shih-liang was a graduate of a German missionary school in Canton. Having studied briefly at the Canton Hospital School where he came to know Sun Yat-sen, Cheng returned to his native village in eastern Kwangtung and opened a pharmacy shop. Ch'en Shao-pai attended briefly the College of Medicine for Chinese. He was probably the closest comrade of Sun Yat-sen through the Hsing-chung hui period, but he sunk into oblivion after 1906. For their biographical sketches, see Feng, *Fragments*, I, 5 and 37-38; also Ch'en Te-yün, ed., *Ch'en Shao-pai hsien-sheng ai-ssu lu* [An Obituary Record of Ch'en Shao-pai] (Canton, 1934?).

<sup>19</sup> For the texts of the two regulations of the Hsing-chung hui, see Kuomintang, *Documents*, III, 2-6. Sharman, p. 36, describes the regulations of the Hong Kong Hsing-chung hui as if they were the regulations of the Honolulu branch. Some Chinese publications also fail to distinguish the two.

<sup>20</sup> Liu Ch'eng-yü, “Hsien tsung-li chiu te lu” [My Reminiscences of Sun Yat-sen], *Kuo-shih kuan kuan-k'an* [Publications of the National Historical Bureau], I, No. 1 (Nanking, Dec. 1946), 48-49. Liu claimed that Sun Yat-sen personally revealed this story to him one day in the former's newspaper office in San Francisco. No specific date was given by Liu, but it was probably in 1910.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Feng Tzu-yu, *Chung-kuo ho-ming yün-tung er-shih-liu nien tsu-chih shih* [Twenty-Six Years' Organizational History of the Revolutionary Movement] (Shanghai, 1948), p. 16; and Ch'en

yet to be established by documents or evidence. Probably the practice of taking such an oath developed gradually, and historians have given it retroactive effect. It is unlikely to have been the practice in Honolulu at the time when the Hsing-chung hui was founded, for the aim of Sun's trip there was to raise funds for establishing an agricultural association. Many joined the organization without the slightest idea of his plan. He might have taken a chosen few into his confidence; the initial members might have sworn allegiance to the organization on an open Bible, but it is inconceivable that they took such a revolutionary oath.

There were striking similarities in the background, education, interest, and Western contacts of Yang Ch'ü-yün, Sun Yat-sen, and their friends, so their joining hands to "revive China" was not an accident. None of them was born to the scholar-official-gentry class; none of them received the traditional education of the Chinese literati. They obtained new ideas from travels, foreign schooling, and contact with foreigners; from witnessing the contrast between their country under Manchu rule and the greater material prosperity and the more efficient administration of colonial governments. It is interesting to note that Yang, Sun, and Tse had ties with overseas Chinese families in Malaya, Honolulu, and Australia respectively.

The discontent of the populace with their alien rulers had been growing in China. As is well known, the Manchu rule had lost its vigor after the turn of the eighteenth century. The internal conditions of the country at the end of that century had many of the phenomena which were characteristic of the end of every dynasty in the history of China: famines, peasant unrest, rebellions, incompetent rulers, government corruption, etc. After the nation was "opened" by British cannon after 1840, China was repeatedly humiliated by foreign powers. But by far the most humiliating was her defeat in the war against Japan in 1894-95. It was a great shock to the whole nation, and it was under these circumstances that Yang, Sun, and their friends attempted to overthrow the Ch'ing Dynasty.

On March 16, 1895, a month before the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace was signed at Shimonoseki, the rebels held a meeting and decided to capture Canton on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, which was to be October 26 of that year.<sup>22</sup> On that day every year, the Chinese, following an immemorial custom, went to the countryside to offer sacrifices before the tombs of their ancestors. It was therefore selected as the opportune moment to carry out their plans. Sun Yat-sen was in charge of the plot in Canton while Yang Ch'ü-yün was responsible for raising funds, buying arms, and recruiting men in Hong Kong. Huang Yung-shang, one of Yang's friends, was said to have contributed HK\$8,000 for the cause by selling a house.<sup>23</sup> By August 27, the plans for capturing Canton were completed, and orders were given for the closing of the Kuen Hang Club. Two days later, the revolutionaries and their sympathizers—among them Ho Kai (Ho Chi), a Chinese barrister and a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, Thomas H. Reid of the *China Mail*, and Ches-

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Hsi-ch'i, *T'ung-meng hui ch'eng-li ch'ien ti Sun Chung-shan* [Sun Yat-sen Prior to the Founding of the T'ung Meng Hui] (Canton, 1957), p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, p. 10; and Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, pp. 9-10. Many Western sources have given September 9, 1895 as the date of Sun Yat-sen's first failure. For example, Sharman, p. 39; Stephen Chen and Robert Payne, *Sun Yat-sen* (New York: John Day, 1946), p. 32; and "Sag-gitarious" (pseud.), *The Strange Apotheosis of Sun Yat-sen* (London: Heath Cranton, 1939), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Tsou, *Draft History*, IV, 1229. In Canton, Sun Yat-sen attempted to organize an agricultural association. His announcement can be found in his *Collected Works*, V, 13-14.

ney Duncan of the *Hongkong Telegraph*—met at a hotel where the policy of the revolutionists was outlined. Reid agreed to work for the sympathy and support of the British Government and the people of England. Later, he and a T. Cowen drafted a proclamation to the foreign powers for the revolutionaries.<sup>24</sup>

While preparations for the attempted revolt were well under way, an election was held in Hong Kong (October 10) to select the "President of the Provisional Government" who would serve if the revolution succeeded.<sup>25</sup> The struggle for the "presidency" between Yang Ch'ü-yün and Sun Yat-sen was keen. Naturally, members of the Fu Jen Literary Society supported Yang while Cheng Shih-liang and Ch'en Shao-pai sided with Sun. The fight for leadership was so intense that for a moment the two groups were on the verge of a split and the whole endeavor jeopardized. According to Ch'en, Sun Yat-sen was at first elected, but was finally forced to resign in favor of Yang Ch'ü-yün.<sup>26</sup>

But the fight for the "presidency" proved to be unnecessary. At the last moment, the revolt, scheduled to take place on October 26, was postponed for two days because preparations in Hong Kong could not be completed in time. On the twenty-seventh, the plot was discovered by the Canton authorities, and three men were arrested. Sun Yat-sen's warning to Hong Kong did not reach Yang Ch'ü-yün in time to stop the sending of men to Canton. On the twenty-eighth, forty-five rebels were arrested upon their arrival in Canton, and two hundred and five revolvers and eighty-odd boxes of ammunition were confiscated.<sup>27</sup> Sun escaped to Hong Kong, thence fled to Japan with a price of one thousand *yüan* on his head. Except for an overnight stay on a Kwangsi mountain bordering French Indo-China early in December 1907, Sun didn't return to the Chinese mainland again until after the success of the Wuchang Revolution sixteen years later.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Sun's defeat was a "great blow" to him (Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, pp. 10-11), and "it always rankled in his breast" (Tse, p. 9). Up to this time the chairmanship of the Hsing-chung hui was apparently open. Two dubious sources, however, give different versions. In *Yang Ch'ü-yün lüeh-shih* previously cited, pp. 8-9, it is stated that on Sept. 30, 1895 Huang Yung-shang resigned from the chairmanship in favor of Yang Ch'ü-yün. So stated in "Shun-te Yu-lieh hsien-sheng pa-shih k'ai-i jung-shou cheng-wen ch'i-shih" [An Announcement for Contribution of Articles in Commemoration of the Eighty-First Birthday of Yu Lieh] (Hong Kong, 1935), p. 4, but with a variant date: "Feb. 21, 1895."

<sup>27</sup> Memorial of Kwangtung Governor T'an to the Throne reporting the attempted revolt of Oct. 26, 1895; reprinted in Feng Tzu-yu, *Chung-hua min-kuo k'ai-kuo chien ko-ming shih* [Revolutionary History Prior to the Founding of the Republic of China], I (Shanghai, 1928), 27-29. Both the scale and scope of the attempted revolt have been exaggerated by subsequent accounts. Several thousand rebels are said to have been mobilized: the number increased after each telling; e.g., Ch'en Hsi-ch'i, *Tung-meng hui*, p. 35 (otherwise a careful study). For Sun Yat-sen's own account written about a year after the event, see his *Kidnapped in London* (London, 1897), pp. 20-27. It is significant that at that time Sun did not claim to be the leader of the revolution.

<sup>28</sup> Sun Yat-sen was, however, occasionally aboard ships which put in at Shanghai and Hong Kong, but he did not go ashore, with the exception of when on two occasions (early 1902 and January 1903) he stayed in Hong Kong for a few days. See Feng, *Fragments*, IV (Shanghai, 1946), 71; Tse, p. 21; and Kuomintang, *Chronology of Sun*, I, 108 and 113. Many fantastic and imaginative accounts on Sun Yat-sen's adventures in the interior of China after 1895 have been written in the West. For example, an entire chapter of Bishop Henry B. Restarick's book, *Sun Yat-sen: Liberator of China* (Yale University Press, 1931), is devoted to the "Unlucky Plan of Revolt in 1904," in which Sun Yat-sen was found at the secret headquarters in Canton personally directing the plot with a Chang Chau. Restarick claimed to have obtained the information from Chang himself, who was "a public notary of the Territory of Hawaii"! Sharman, p. 102, also gives (rather skeptically perhaps) a full page to Restarick's "vivid narrative" of this revolt, and has the date "corrected" as having occurred in 1906.

With the same price on his head, Yang Ch'ü-yün left Hong Kong for Saigon on November 13; then proceeded to Singapore, Madras, Colombo, and South Africa. He does not seem to have arrived in Johannesburg before the end of the following year (1896), where he founded a Hsing-chung hui branch. However, in the summer of 1897, he decided to return to the Far East, arriving at Yokohama on March 21, 1898.<sup>29</sup> His arrival, according to Ch'en Shao-pai, was an unpleasant surprise to Sun Yat-sen.<sup>30</sup>

Sun had been living in Japan since August 1896 after returning from his first trip to the United States, England, and Canada. Miyazaki Torazō, a Japanese greatly interested in Chinese affairs, had sought him out, and introduced him to a number of Japanese in and out of the government.<sup>31</sup> The support of these Japanese was crucial both to Sun's livelihood and to his cause at that time. It was not altogether improbable that Sun and Yang might reach some kind of understanding on the leadership of the revolutionary movement when they met. Although Yang retained his nominal chairmanship of the Hsing-chung hui until 1900, his position in the organization had in fact been greatly weakened after 1895. Sun, on the other hand, had gained much publicity through the famous kidnapping episode in London,<sup>32</sup> and he had become more intellectually mature after his trip to the United States and England. The Japanese support at that time was also helpful in enhancing his position. In fact, it enabled him to finance Ch'en Shao-pai's establishment of the *Chung-kuo jih-pao* (China Daily News) in Hong Kong in the fall of 1899.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike Sun Yat-sen, a professional revolutionary after 1895, Yang Ch'ü-yün was now a middle-aged man with a family to support. In Yokohama, he had to make his living by teaching English. In January 1900, he returned to Hong Kong and resigned the chairmanship in favor of Sun Yat-sen. Tse Tsan Tai was surprised to learn from him that Sun had demanded his resignation. Yang explained:

We were dangerously near being split up into two parties some time ago. Dr. Sun Yat-sen informed me one day that the "Ko Lao Whui" party [Kao-lao hui, or Society of the Elders and Brothers] of the Yangtze provinces had appointed him "President," and hinted that as there could not be two Presidents, it would be obligatory for me to work independently if I would not recognize him in his new position. I confessed to Sun Yat-sen that I was quite pleased to resign my position, and advised him not to encourage separation. I also informed him that I was always willing to sacrifice my life, let alone my position, for the good of the cause.<sup>34</sup>

Yang's decision was the result of Sun's scheming. Sun had tried to gain undisputed leadership of the Hsing-chung hui by establishing a new organization called the Hsing-han hui (Revive Han Society) which took in several leaders of the Triads

<sup>29</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, pp. 10, 12, and 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> For an autobiographical sketch of Miyazaki Torazō and the story of his acquaintance with Sun Yat-sen, see his *San jū san nen no yume* [The Thirty-Three Years' Dream] (Tokyo, 1926), pp. 117-183; also Jansen, pp. 54-58 and 64-68.

<sup>32</sup> Sun Yat-sen was lured into the Chinese legation in London on October 11, 1896, but was released twelve days later. His *Kidnapped in London* was written after the episode. For a source book on the event, see Lo Chia-lun, *Chung-shan hsien-sheng lun-tun pei-nan shih-liao k'ao-ting* [A Critical Study of the Official Documents Concerning Dr. Sun Yat-sen's "Kidnapped in London"] (Shanghai, 1930).

<sup>33</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, pp. 36 and 41.

<sup>34</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, pp. 16-17.



and the Society of the Elders and Brothers.<sup>35</sup> In November 1899, they were brought to Hong Kong to confer with Ch'en Shao-pai and Miyazaki Torazō; then they took an unusual step which gave formal recognition to Sun's leadership in the revolutionary movement: a chairman's seal was made, and Miyazaki brought it to Yokohama and presented it to him.<sup>36</sup> The new party, however, gained little recognition; its name was soon dropped. Since Yang Ch'ü-yün could not and would not challenge Sun's leadership, no purpose was served by a new organization. Besides, the leaders of the Society of the Elders and Brothers soon forsook the revolutionary movement and went over to the reformers' camp.

While Sun Yat-sen finally gained undisputed leadership within the Hsing-chung hui, he was confronted by competition from without. Before 1898 the reform movement under the leadership of K'ang Yu-wei directed its appeal to the gentry-scholar-official class in China, but after the coup d'état of September 21, 1898, efforts were made to get the support of overseas Chinese. The overseas Chinese always had great respect for the scholar-officials from home, and they were easily won over by prominent reformers. For example, Feng Tzu-yu's father, chairman of the Yokohama Hsing-chung hui, became the manager of a newspaper edited by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, a leading reformer.

When K'ang Yu-wei was exiled to Japan in November 1898, Sun Yat-sen wished to call on him to express his sympathy, but the reform leader refused to see him. Their mutual Japanese friends tried in vain to have these two groups cooperate.<sup>37</sup> In a letter to Tse Tsan Tai, dated November 24, 1898, Yang Ch'ü-yün reported from Yokohama that "selfishness and jealousy" made the cooperation difficult. From the end of 1898 to early 1899, there was at least one exchange of view by correspondence between K'ang Yu-wei and Tse Tsan Tai, who remained in Hong Kong. After K'ang left Japan, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao took up the correspondence. While both sides realized the importance of cooperation, no agreement was reached.<sup>38</sup> In a letter of June 6, 1899, Yang informed Tse of his meeting with Liang in Yokohama: He [Liang Ch'i-ch'ao] advised me to try my best to go on with the work of our party and he will try his best to go on with the work of his party. He does not like to cooperate with us yet. Hong's [K'ang's] party is too proud and jealous of our Chinese-English scholars. They don't like to have the same rank as us; they always aspire to governing us or want us all to submit to them.<sup>39</sup>

Through the summer and the fall of 1899, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao held several meetings with Sun Yat-sen in Japan, and at one time the two were said to have come near to an agreement. From the letters written to Sun during this period, it is clear that Liang himself was quite willing to work with the revolutionaries, but his strong

<sup>35</sup> In his autobiography, Sun Yat-sen called the event the "merger of secret societies in the Yangtze Valley, Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Fukien provinces into the Hsing-chung hui." (Sun, *Collected Works*, I, 36). This was criticized by a Communist historian as "far-fetched." See Yung Meng-yüan, ed., *Chung-kuo chin-tai shih tzu-liao hsüan-chi* [Selected Source Materials on Modern History of China] (Peking, 1954), p. 542.

<sup>36</sup> Kuomintang, *Chronology of Sun*, I, 87-88; Miyazaki, p. 183. Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, p. 17 ff., mistakenly identifies the new organization as the T'ung-meng hui, which did not come into existence until 1905.

<sup>37</sup> For a personal account on the relations between the revolutionaries and the reformers, see Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, pp. 23-26, 32-34, 36-39, and 41-44.

<sup>38</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>39</sup> Tse, *The Chinese Republic*, p. 15.

sense of loyalty to his teacher, if nothing else, held him back. On January 11, 1900, ten days after his arrival at Honolulu in connection with the establishment of the "Protect the Emperor" Society there, he wrote to Sun:

There are things that I may be obliged to do here merely for the sake of expediency. But you must forgive me and try to understand my difficult situation. In short, since we have become friends and agreed to cooperate, there should be no disunity between us in the future on world [Chinese] affairs. I have been constantly thinking about this matter day and night. If you will kindly give me time, I trust that I shall be able to find a good method of reconciliation [between the two groups].<sup>40</sup>

While the revolutionaries attacked the reformers for their organization of the "Protect the Emperor" Society, the final split occurred only after the failure of their respective military actions in the late summer and early fall of 1900.

The year 1900 was a year of upheaval in China. When the Boxers were active in the North, three governors-general of southern provinces ignored the imperial decree of June 21 which declared war against the foreign powers. During the time of unrest, Hsing-chung hui members attempted to use the influence of the Hong Kong Governor, Sir Henry A. Blake, to persuade Li Hung-chang, Governor-General of Kwangtung and Kwangsi, to declare his independence from the Empire. The scheme was initiated by Ho Kai, who had sympathized with the attempted revolt in 1895. He suggested to Ch'en Shao-pai that the Hsing-chung hui leaders write to Governor Blake, who would relay their idea to Li Hung-chang. If Li agreed to the plan, they would then support him. Ch'en notified Sun Yat-sen, who readily agreed. Consequently, Ho Kai drafted a letter in English;<sup>41</sup> it was signed by Sun Yat-sen, Yang Ch'ü-yün, Ch'en Shao-pai, Tse Tsan Tai, Cheng Shih-liang, and four other members of the Hsing-chung hui. The name of the organization, however, was not mentioned.<sup>42</sup>

The letter was ambiguous.<sup>43</sup> While it attacked the corruption and inefficiency of the Manchu Court, it did not suggest that the regime should be overthrown. It stated that the "patriots of South China" requested the assistance of the Hong Kong Governor "in consultation with their country" to carry out the following program:

(1) to remove the capital to Hankow or Nanking; (2) to establish a "central government" headed by one "who embodied the wishes of the people" and exercised his power within the framework of a constitution; to set up national and provincial assemblies—each province was to be self-governing, but "part of its revenue was to be submitted to the central government for paying foreign debts, military expenditures, and the expenditures of the central government and the palace"; (3) to give foreigners equal commercial rights; (4) to increase officials' salaries in order to end corruption; (5) to adopt the Anglo-Saxon legal system; and (6) to create special

<sup>40</sup> Feng, *History Prior*, I, 47. Three Letters of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao to Sun Yat-sen written during this period are reprinted in facsimile in Feng's book, I, 44-47. Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations in this article have been made by the present author.

<sup>41</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, p. 45.

<sup>42</sup> Feng, *Fragments*, IV, 92.

<sup>43</sup> For the Chinese text of the letter, see Sun, *Collected Works*, V, 16-19. Judging by the content, the letter was written after the foreign legations in Peking had been besieged by the Boxers and the Manchu soldiers.

schools for the study of law, science, and the arts in lieu of the civil examination system.<sup>44</sup>

Li Hung-chang's attitude cannot be ascertained, though his aide, Liu Hsüeh-hsün, was reportedly enthusiastic. When in the middle of July it became known that Li had decided to accept a new appointment as Governor-General of Chihli, the revolutionaries and their Japanese sympathizers intensified their preparations for revolt. Shortly before it took place, Sun Yat-sen sent Hirayama Shū, a Japanese adventurer interested in Chinese affairs, to deliver a letter to Liu Hsüeh-hsün. In this letter, written under a Japanese pseudonym in September at Taipei, Sun outlined the organization of the revolutionary government. While it was a letter of expediency, it nevertheless reflected to some extent the political outlook of Sun Yat-sen at the time. It reads:

I am sending my confidant, Mr. Hirayama, to see you. He will convey my wishes in requesting you to organize a provisional government in order to manage national affairs. A pentarchy form of government will be good enough for the time being. Whether the head of the government will be called President or Emperor will be decided by you, but I will definitely let you have the post. The other three members of the pentarchy will be in charge of the Interior, Finance, and Foreign Affairs [Ministries] respectively. The choice of personnel will be yours.

I should like to suggest, however, that Yang Ch'ü-yün be in charge of Finance, Li Chi-t'ang, of Foreign Affairs . . . and Sheng Hsüan-huai, the Interior. I myself shall take care of Military Affairs. I shall try to capture some territories first; then you may come. Also if it is desirable to have envoys abroad as soon as possible—I can find qualified persons for such tasks. For example, Ho [Kai] and Yung [Wing] are very well suited for top diplomatic positions. . . .

The most important thing at the moment is to have a large amount of money. . . . I hope that you, Yang, and Li, together with other comrades, will be able to raise one million *yüan* for me immediately. Give the money to Hirayama, and he will bring it to me. . . .

I had intended at first to have Governor-General Li [Hung-chang] head the new government. Since he has accepted the new appointment for peace negotiation, I am afraid that he would not acquiesce in our request. . . . So I will definitely let you have the post. This decision has been made known to the [revolutionary] army, and it will be announced to the public when the appropriate time comes. . . .<sup>45</sup>

Nothing came of the letter. The Waichow revolt broke out on October 8, 1900, on Chinese territory bordering British-leased Kowloon opposite Hong Kong. Military plans had been mapped out by Sun Yat-sen, Yang Ch'ü-yün, and their Japanese friends, and were carried out under the command of Cheng Shih-liang. Although Yang intended to participate in the revolt in the interior, Sun persuaded him to stay in Hong Kong to rally support from local merchants.<sup>46</sup> The troops counted on for

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen*, p. 90.

<sup>45</sup> The letter is reprinted in Feng, *Fragments*, IV, 98–100. Interestingly enough it cannot be found in any of Sun Yat-sen's *Collected Works* compiled by the Kuomintang. Two persons mentioned in the letter require a word of explanation. Li Chi-t'ang was a son of a wealthy Chinese merchant in Hong Kong. Induced to join the Hsing-chung hui by Yang Ch'ü-yün, he generously contributed funds for the cause. Yung Wing, the "first Chinese student in the United States," had met Tse Tsan Tai and Yang Ch'ü-yün in Hong Kong early in April 1900. He was on his way to the United States again. They exchanged views on the political situation of China, and Tse wrote to Sun suggesting the latter to meet Yung when Yung arrived in Japan. Tse, p. 18. It is not clear how Sheng Hsüan-huai came into the picture.

<sup>46</sup> Letter of Sun Yat-sen to Hirayama Shū, dated July 24 [1900]. Sun, *Collected Works*, V, 20.

this revolution were the armed patriotic bandits in today's Paoan district, Kwangtung Province. Some of them were of course members of the Triads; but the secret society played a secondary role.<sup>47</sup> The objective was to capture the coastal areas of Waichow, eastern Kwangtung, then to advance in the direction of Fukien in order to receive military supplies from Taiwan across the strait, where Sun Yat-sen was trying to obtain help from the Japanese authorities.<sup>48</sup> But aid did not come, and after some successful skirmishes, Cheng Shih-liang was obliged to disband his troops two week later. Thus ended the "second revolutionary attempt" of Sun Yat-sen. Cheng died in Hong Kong less than a year after this campaign.<sup>49</sup>

During the early stage of fighting, a Kwangtung official sent an emissary to Yang Ch'ü-yün in an attempt to buy the rebels for the government by offering them official positions. Considering it an opportunity for legitimate expansion of the revolutionary forces, Yang readily agreed. He wrote a letter to Sun Yat-sen advising him to accept the offer.<sup>50</sup> Whatever doubts Sun might have expressed with regard to this suggestion, the revolt was so brief that the question did not receive serious attention. However, Yang became the center of the Canton agents' attention, especially after he was known to be involved in the unsuccessful attempt (October 28, 1900) on the life of Te Shou, governor of Kwangtung.<sup>51</sup> At six o'clock on the afternoon of January 10, 1901, he was shot while in his schoolroom at 52 Gage Street. He died the next morning.<sup>52</sup>

Years later, Ch'en Shao-pai stated his impression of Yang in these words:

<sup>47</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>48</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>49</sup> Feng, *Fragments*, V, 16-22. The memorial of the Kwangtung Governor Te Shou to the Throne reporting on this revolt is reprinted in Ch'en Ch'un-sheng, "Keng-tzu Hui-chou ch'i-i chi" [An Account of the Waichow Revolt of 1900], *Chien-kuo yüeh-k'an* [Chien-kuo Monthly], V, No. 3 (Nanking, July 1931), 10-12. One of the by-products of the Waichow revolt was the enhancement of Sun Yat-sen's prestige in China; for his name was now mentioned along with that of K'ang Yu-wei, the respectable "tutor of the emperor." See Li Chien-nung, *Chung-kuo chin-pai nien cheng-chi shih* [The Political History of China in the Last One Hundred Years] (Shanghai, 1947), p. 212; for an English version, see Ssu-yu Teng and Jeremy Ingalls, trans. and ed., *The Political History of China, 1840-1928* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), p. 183. The official memorials linked the action of the revolutionaries with the attempted armed revolt of the reformers led by T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang and Lin Kuei in 1900 on the Yangtze River, although there was no coordination between them. See the memorial of the Kwangtung governor, reprinted in Ch'en Ch'un-sheng, pp. 10-12, and the memorial of Governor-General Chang Chih-tung on the attempted armed revolt of the reformers, reprinted in *Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh hui* (Chinese Historical Association), *Hsin-hai ko-ming* [Revolution of 1911] ("Chung-kuo chin-tai shih tzu-liao ts'ung-k'an" [Collection of Materials on Modern History of China]; ed. Ch'ai Te-keng and others; Shanghai, 1957), I, 264-269.

<sup>50</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, pp. 48-49. Official Kuomintang historians have sometimes hinted that Yang Ch'ü-yün "betrayed" the revolution because of this alleged compromise. See Teng Mu-han, "Sun hsien-sheng tzu-shu shih-i" [Notes on Sun Yat-sen's Reminiscences], *Chien-kuo yüeh-k'an*, I, No. 4 (Aug., 1929), 82-83. The accusation does not seem justified under the circumstances.

<sup>51</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, p. 52. The attempt on the life of the Kwangtung governor was part of the operation of the Waichow revolt. The aim was to make disturbances in the provincial capital while military actions were being taken on the coastal areas of the province. The bomb went off, but the governor was unhurt. Shih Chien-ju, who was responsible for the plot, confessed after capture that it was through Yang's introduction and influence that he had joined the Hsing-chung hui, and consequently Yang was warned by his friends to go away. Although Hong Kong was dangerously near Canton, he did not flee. For the Kwangtung governor's bulletin on the case, see Feng, *Fragments*, V, 32-33; for a biographical sketch of Shih Chien-ju, see Teng Mu-han, "Shih Chien-ju shih-lüeh," *Chien-kuo yüeh-k'an*, II, No. 6 (Nanking, April 1930), 61-64.

<sup>52</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, pp. 52-54; Feng, *Fragments*, V, 13-14; and Tse, p. 20. Yang Ch'ü-yün was survived by his wife, one son, and two daughters. Sun Yat-sen in Japan raised some funds for the family.

Yang was a man of great ambition: dignified, healthy, and energetic. In social gatherings, he always unconsciously took the seat of honor. But he was cordial, pleasant, and a good talker. After joining the Hsing-chung hui, he was very fond of carrying on propaganda work wherever he went; and he could expound very well the history and theory of revolution in daily conversation. Being educated in English schools, he had little Chinese education, and he later studied Chinese diligently. He was always seen with a book in his hands.<sup>53</sup>

In summing up Yang's career, it should be noted that although he successfully fought against Sun Yat-sen's leadership in the revolutionary attempt of 1895, his influence in the Hsing-chung hui waned even before he was assassinated five years later. But the claim that the early revolutionary movement was financed solely by Sun's friends and relatives in Hawaii is inaccurate.

As a revolutionary party, the organization of the Hsing-chung hui left much to be desired. In fact, judging by its regulations, it can hardly be called a secret revolutionary organization. For all practical purposes the regulations were never observed; there is little indication that meetings were held according to the procedures prescribed. Nevertheless, as the first political society in modern China, the founding of the Hsing-chung hui has great significance. And in that society it was the members, not the organizational rules, that counted. After 1895, Sun Yat-sen was identified with the party; wherever he went, the place became, in fact if not in name, the Hsing-chung hui headquarters.

The five years between 1895 and 1900 constituted a distinctive period in the Chinese revolutionary movement. It was a beginning of the end, a single spark that eventually burned down the Manchu house. After 1900, a year that marked a turning point of the Chinese attitude toward the Manchu throne, a spontaneous revolutionary movement developed at home and abroad. But in those five years, almost all the active revolutionaries were of Kwangtung origin (although Yang Ch'ü-yün's family came from Fukien, he was brought up in Hong Kong, so might well be considered a Cantonese). Their operational bases were overseas Chinese communities, and their activities in China were confined to Kwangtung Province alone. Their supporters were recruited from the lower stratum of the Chinese society. Sun Yat-sen emerged as the undisputed leader, but he was unable to organize another armed revolt until after the formation of the T'ung-meng hui (United League), a unified revolutionary organization founded in 1905 under the leadership of Sun and Huang Hsing. It is significant that, except for Sun Yat-sen, not a single Hsing-chung hui member played a leading role in the subsequent revolutionary movement.

<sup>53</sup> Ch'en Shao-pai, *Hsing-chung hui*, p. 55.

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